

MAR 16 1963

LIFE

CPYRGHT

FOIAb3b

## A SEQUEL TO THE BAY OF PIGS

# Four U. S. pilots—they died while 'serving their country'

CPYRGHT

by BILL SURFACE

The confused, controversial story of the four American fliers who were killed in the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion finally drew verification from the White House last week. President Kennedy said that the airmen died while "serving their country as volunteers." But, he added, it would not be helpful to the U.S. to go into details at this time.

If the facts of the fatal mission were to be kept locked in government files, the opinions—and emotions—of those close to the dead fliers were revealed in interviews in Birmingham, Ala. Three of the four widows have lived there since the disappearance of their husbands. A fourth, Mrs. Catherine Baker, moved to California and is now in seclusion. All have been receiving twice-a-month pensions of \$225 and up—and nothing is known of the source of this money except that it is paid through the Bankers Trust Co. in New York. For these women, their families and friends, the long ordeal of doubt and grief has turned into resentment over recent head-

lines and the government's official silence. This is what they say:

MRS. MARION JANE SHAMBURGER, 37, is the widow of Riley W. Shamburger, who had been a test pilot for Hayes Aircraft Corp. in Birmingham and a major in the Alabama Air National Guard. She said: "I never suspected a thing until a few days after the Cuban business. I came home and the maid had let this man in. He said he was a lawyer from the Double Check Corp. of Miami and that Riley and the other three boys had been flying cargo. They were last heard from on April 19—our 15th wedding anniversary—and had radioed the engine was going out. Later we received death certificates and I held a memorial service.

"I've accepted the fact that Riley's gone and this is the way he would have wanted to die. Riley'd be disappointed in me if I talked too much about it. But I'll tell you one thing—I don't believe that business about the engine going out and Riley losing altitude. Anyone at Hayes can tell you Riley brought planes in with an engine on fire and then went out and

played golf a few minutes later.

"Riley was a good pilot and was making good money before he was involved in this thing. I got Candy [her daughter, 15] a new car and I got one, too, but I can't stand to get rid of the old one. I don't think it's been away from the front of the house since Riley went down."

MRS. RILEY W. SHAMBURGER SR., 63, mother of Pilot Shamburger, holds to the hope that her son is still alive in Cuba. She wrote President Kennedy and received an answer from Brig. General Godfrey McHugh of the Air Force, stating that he could give her no pertinent information. "I don't want anything secret," she said. "All I want to know is, is Riley dead or alive?"

MRS. VIOLET GRAY, 35, widow of Wade C. Gray, has denied that her husband was a "soldier of fortune," as the four have been described, but declined to make further comment. Her silence was explained by her friend, Mrs. MARGARET RAY, 31, widow of Thomas W. (Pete) Ray and the mother of two children. "Violet Gray came by here the other night," said Mrs. Ray, "and we drove over to Jane Shamburger's. The three of us talked it over and agreed that the publicity is shocking. We can't let it go on. The kids turn on TV and see a news show and it frightens them."